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Authorial identity as a liminal space: an autoethnographic reflection

Katherine Davis-Wright 

University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

ABSTRACT

My doctoral research uses ethnographically-oriented arts-based workshops and semi-structured interviews to look at how Year 10 students' experiences of creative writing affect their authorial identities. Before I started data collection, I noticed that I felt like an imposter, as high workload as a teacher on top of doctoral study commitments left very little time for me to continue working on my own creative writing and I simply had not prioritized my own art. I took part in National Novel Writing Month, aiming to write 50,000 words in one month. This is an autoethnographic reflection on how taking time to prioritize my art reignited my passion for novel writing and restored my confidence in my abilities. I have chosen a braided autoethnographic approach, balancing theory and emotion, and will view my self-reflection through the theoretical framework I created for my doctorate, based on Gee's (2000; 2018) affinity spaces and Craft's (2001) theories of creativity.

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identity

Introduction

This article reflects upon the development of my authorial identity using a braided autoethnographic approach, intertwining my personal narrative with analysis of those experiences through the theoretical framework I developed as part of my doctoral research. Drawing on my experiences as a doctoral researcher, teacher, and writer, I examine how participating in NaNoWriMo 2023 (National Novel Writing Month) enabled me to reconnect with my authorial identity that had become obscured by the demands of academic and professional life as a Teacher of English in a busy comprehensive school in England.

I begin my reflection by outlining my positionality, reflecting on the tensions between my multiple roles and identities, and how these shaped my engagement with creative writing. I then introduce the theoretical framework, combining Gee's (2000; 2018) theory of affinity spaces with Craft's (2001) concept of little-c creativity to explore how these ideas contribute to authorial identity formation. The article then explains the

CONTACT Katherine Davis-Wright  kedavis2@sheffield.ac.uk, Katherine.wright@hotmail.co.uk

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braided autoethnographic methodology, which allows for the integration of lived experience alongside a theoretical analysis. This approach provides a reflective lens for exploring my NaNoWriMo journey, including the role of the Discord platform as an online affinity space, the motivational structure of ‘winning,’ and the supportive community that emerged from my participation in this event. Next, I discuss novel writing as a liminal space, paralleling the uncertainties and insecurities of creative writing with those of doctoral study. I reflect on how engaging in this space enabled me to reclaim and reconstruct my authorial identity, and how this, in turn, enhanced the authenticity of my teaching and research practice. In doing so, I argue that the process of writing and becoming an author – more than the product of, for example, a novel – is central to authorial identity.

Positionality

I am a final-year doctoral student at the University of Sheffield, undertaking an EdD (Doctorate in Education) with a focus on secondary school students’ experiences of creative writing both within and outside of the National Curriculum. Alongside my doctoral studies, I work as a teacher of English at a comprehensive secondary school in the South East of England, where I teach a wide range of students of different abilities from Key Stage 3 through to Key Stage 5.

Prior to my current role, I worked in pharmaceutical research and development. I later pursued a full-time Master’s degree in Creative Writing at City, University of London. This unique programme, with a focus on novel writing, required students to complete a full manuscript of either a literary or crime novel in order to qualify. My debut literary novel, *Erosion*, was written as part of this programme and provided significant insight into the craft and discipline of novel writing. Although I had been writing creatively from a young age, the Master’s course gave me the structure and motivation I needed to complete a full manuscript. The two-year programme, which I thoroughly enjoyed, included weekly writing exercises, workshops with university staff and peers, and lectures on various aspects of narrative craft, such as dialogue, vernacular, structure and plotting. While the course required a considerable amount of independent work, it also fostered a strong sense of community among the cohort. The friendships and peer support I experienced as part of my course were integral to my development as a writer and helped shape my authorial identity, and were arguably my first writing affinity space.

Shortly after completing my master’s degree, I began a PGCE and soon qualified as a teacher. Although I initially trained to teach German and French, I switched at the end of the programme to specialize in English, driven by a deep interest in literature and writing pedagogy. Since 2019, I have been a Teacher of English and am currently one of the few members of my department with a background in English language or creative writing, as most of my colleagues have a background in English Literature. This phenomenon was also observed by Cremin, Myhill, and Oliver (2023), who writes that an ‘unexpected outcome’ of her research was the attitude of some of the teachers and writers she worked with, with one writer expressing their view that English teachers are ‘trained in the art of criticism rather than in writing’ as opposed to art teachers, who ‘are passing on a craft, they’re passing on what they can already do, they can draw and paint’ (404). This experience sparked my curiosity about how creative writing is framed within the

curriculum and (de)prioritized by examination boards and it was this interest ultimately led me to pursue doctoral research. My research explores students' experiences of creative writing both inside and outside the formal curriculum. To investigate this, I have conducted semi-structured interviews and facilitated arts-based creative writing workshops, as well as extensive thematic analysis of interview data to explore how students' authorial identity is constructed. As I near the completion of my doctorate, I find myself reflecting on the challenges of maintaining a writerly identity while also being a full-time educator and researcher. Ironically, while my research centres on students' perceptions of themselves as writers and their authorial identities, I have often felt disconnected from my own. In studying the creative lives of others, I have had to confront the gradual erosion of my own authorial self.

Teaching can feel all-consuming at times, and there have been several points in my career so far that I will admit that I have prioritized work over my own well-being. This is a relatively common theme in teaching in the UK, with Beames et al. asserting that 'school teachers are a vulnerable workforce' due to the high levels of reported stress, burn-out, depression, fatigue and reduced self-confidence, amongst other negative risk factors (Beames 2023, 26). Certainly, excessive workload and consequent scarcity of time contributed to a period of time in which I consistently prioritized my professional and academic workloads rather than my own physical or mental wellbeing. Starting data collection and reflecting on what I was actually asking participants to consider as part of my study made me re-evaluate this. When presenting my work at doctoral study weekends or conferences, I was asking audiences to consider what made a writer. A common question I would have them initially consider was this: *Is the concept of a writer, for you, more bound in the noun ('I am a writer') or in the verb ('I write, so I'm a writer')?* In theory, I related more to the verb, but on reflection, I felt like a fraud. At the time of this reflection, I hadn't written anything creative in over six months. Was I still a writer? An artist? If I wasn't, then I wasn't fit to conduct a study using a/r/tography, because I wasn't an artist. And if I was, then it was clear that I needed to write.

Theoretical framework

I have decided to take a braided ethnographic approach to this study, where I examine my personal experiences of creative writing alongside the broader cultural and social contexts that I exist within. I have chosen to braid my own experiences, emotions, and feelings with Gee's (2000; 2018) theory of affinity spaces and Craft's (2001) theory of little-c creativity, which are the same theories utilized within my doctoral research as my theoretical framework for analysing participants' responses about the development of their authorial identity. I decided on a braided ethnography approach because, as various scholars argue (for example, Adams, Holman Jones, and Ellis 2022; Tarisayi 2023), braided ethnography allows for the weaving together of personal narrative with theory especially for personal, context-dependent endeavors like teaching, or indeed, writing.

Gee (2001, 2017, 2018) argues that affinity spaces are places where groups of people are brought together via a shared interest or engagement in a common activity. These affinity spaces may be physical spaces or online affinity spaces. Gee (2018) argues that 'within these affinity spaces, people are fully engaged in helping each other to learn, act, and produce, regardless of their age, place of origin, formal credentials, or level of

expertise' (9). Gee (2000) describes a facet of identity as affinity identities (A-Identities), where people develop identities related to their interests and hobbies. Gee (2000) describes an affinity space of a *Star Trek* convention, which functions as a affinity space for fan the TV series *Star Trek*:

Being a Star Trek fan, in the sense I intend here, is composed of sets of distinctive experiences (e.g. attending shows, meeting actors from Star Trek at such shows, chatting on the Internet, collecting memorabilia, trading such memorabilia, dressing like a character in Star Trek). The source of this access – the 'power' that determines it or to which the person is 'subject' – is a set of distinctive practices. In turn, the source of this power is not nature or an institution, or even other people's discourse and dialogue alone, but an 'affinity group.' [...] An affinity group is made up of people who may be dispersed across a large space (may, in fact, be in different countries). They may share little besides their interest in, say, Star Trek. What people in the group share, and must share to constitute an affinity group, is allegiance to, access to, and participation in specific practices that provide each of the group's members the requisite experiences. The process through which this power works, then, is participation or sharing. (Gee 2000, 105)

In a similar way, in my positionality section, I described the experience of partaking in an affinity group during my MA. I also facilitated an affinity group space for my research participants through the arts-based workshops I ran as part of my doctoral study.

I am also particularly drawn to Craft's (2001) theories of creativity, with her theories of big-C and little-c creativity forming a key part of my theoretical framework.

Craft argues that big C creativity, or 'high creativity' refers to extraordinary creative genius, performed by people who are outstanding in their fields, and recognized for their brilliance (Craft, 2001, p.46). This is supported by Gardner (1997), who attempted to classify these archetypes of creative genius into a taxonomy of sorts: masters, makers, introspectors and influencers. On the other hand, 'little c creativity' is creativity which focuses on the 'resourcefulness and agency of ordinary people, rather than the extraordinary contributions and insights of the few' (Craft, Jeffrey, and Leibling 2001, 49). This recognition of creativity as the domain of all people, not just a talented few, is important in education, especially in comprehensive secondary education where we teach a cross-section of people from many different backgrounds and of many different abilities.

In this study, I adopt a braided autoethnographic approach that weaves together personal narrative and theoretical analysis to explore the development of my authorial identity. By interlacing my lived experiences with Gee's (2000; 2018) theory of affinity spaces and A-identities, and Craft's (2001) concept of little-c creativity, I position myself both as researcher and subject. These theoretical frameworks, which also underpin my doctoral research, enable me to contextualize my creative practices, exemplified here through the example of my participation in NaNoWriMo 2023, within broader sociocultural and educational discourses. Gee's (2018) theory helps illuminate how online and in-person writing communities function as affinity spaces that shape identity through shared practice, while Craft's (2001) notion of everyday creativity foregrounds the value of creative expression by ordinary individuals. The intertwining of these theories with my experiences and identities (writer, teacher and researcher) reflects the essence of braided autoethnography: a reflective, multi-stranded method that foregrounds both the individual's voice and the cultural frameworks that shape it.

Nanowrimo: the premise

In November 2023, having reflected on this feeling of imposter syndrome, I decided to stop academic pursuits for a month to conduct a personal experiment and to take part in National Novel Writing Month. This was well-timed as, coincidentally, it coincided with a period of waiting for ethical approval. On the NaNoWriMo website (NaNoWriMo, 2023), the organizers describe the challenge as:

National Novel Writing Month began in 1999 as a daunting but straightforward challenge: to write 50,000 words of a novel in thirty days. Now, each year on November 1, hundreds of thonds of people around the world begin to write, determined to end the month with a first draft. They enter the month as elementary school teachers, mechanics, or stay-at-home parents. They leave novelists. (NaNoWriMo, 2023)

With this in mind, I made time to write in November 2023. I completed 50,000 words by 24th November and noticed a massive difference in wellbeing. Whilst this is clearly not a writing pace that would be sustainable long term, it showed me that I *am* still a writer, regardless of hiatus. This refreshed insight into writing through the process of writing my own second novel will help me identify with research participants, who may feel similarly challenged when considering their own identity.

Nanowrimo: the process

The way in which different writers approach NaNoWriMo varies widely. Some participants adopt a mathematical strategy, dividing the 50,000-word target by the 30 days in November, and attempting to write approximately 1,667 words each day. However, as a pragmatist, I recognized that there would be some days in November when I would be unable to meet this daily total due to other commitments and workload demands (for example, my Year 11 students sat mock GCSE exams during this period, which I had to mark within a tight turnaround as their English teacher).

Instead, I adopted an approach of writing little and often, taking advantage of brief opportunities during the week, and dedicating larger blocks of time at weekends to write more words and develop chapters more fully when circumstances allowed. I wrote wherever I could: during my lunch break at school, late into the night at my desk at home, on the train, in cafés, and, memorably, once in the car on the M1 on my way home from a doctoral residential weekend in Sheffield, which unfortunately contributed to a severe bout of motion sickness.

Writing in this way soon became embedded in my everyday routine, as I prioritized my creative practice in a manner not usually afforded to me by the constraints of my professional and academic commitments. Once writing became habitual, it no longer felt difficult or unpleasant to sit down and produce words. Even on occasions when I experienced writer's block, I was able to overcome it and mitigate any associated negative emotions by reminding myself of the time-bound nature of the challenge. This constraint encouraged me to move on and write a different section of the novel, rather than becoming immobilized by a single problem area.

The NaNoWriMo website featured a word count tracker that allowed participants to log the number of words written in each session, reflect on how they felt while writing, and record the locations in which they wrote. This data was then used to generate a visual

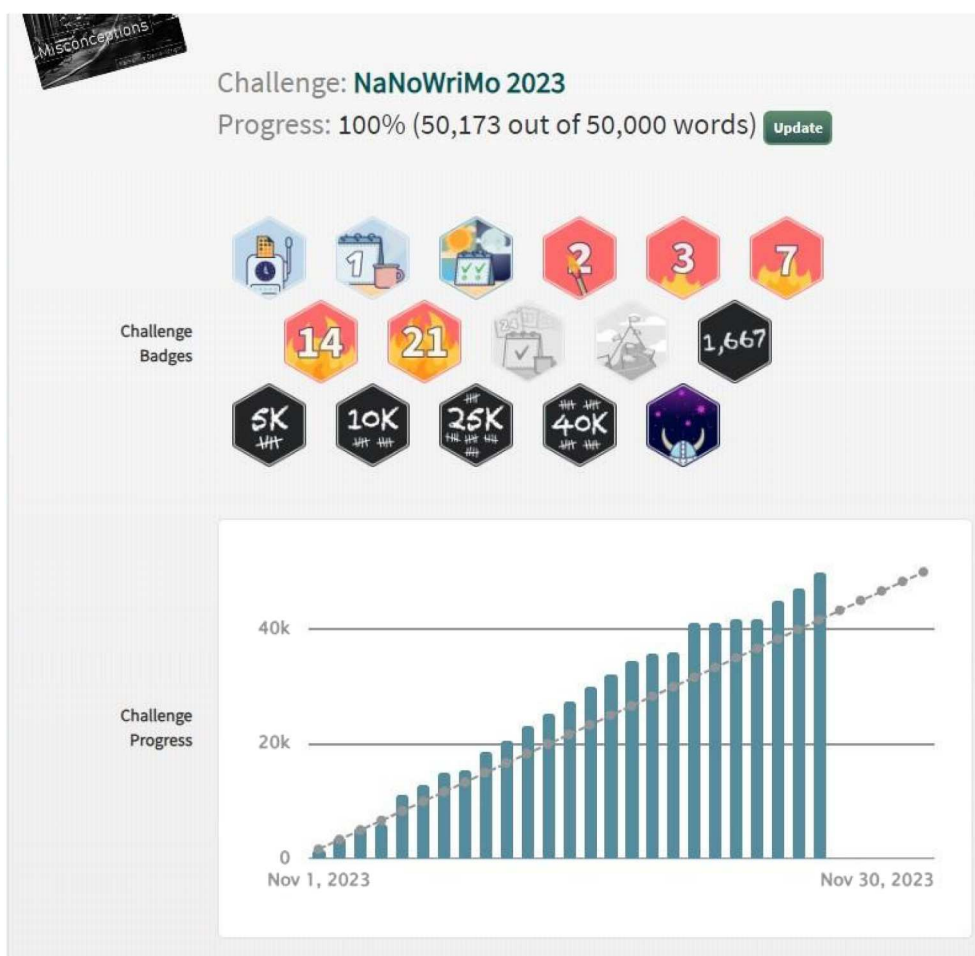


Figure 1. Graphs containing my NaNoWriMo data from November 2023.

graph (see Figure 1). Participants could also earn digital badges by achieving various milestones, for example, reaching specific word counts or logging writing every day for the full 30 days. I found this tracker incredibly motivating, as it provided a visual representation of my progress. While creativity is not a linear process, I found the structure of the graph, at least for the purposes of this challenge, immensely gratifying. Importantly, NaNoWriMo rewards persistence, playfulness, and the act of showing up to write, rather than expecting polished prose or 'big-C' creative genius. In line with Craft, Jeffrey, and Leibling's (2001) theory of little-c creativity, the challenge validates everyday creativity and affirms the value of imperfect, in-progress work. By emphasizing word count over literary merit, NaNoWriMo fosters an inclusive and productive creative environment in which all writers, regardless of experience or expertise, are encouraged to engage in the process of creation.

Nanowrimo: discord as an affinity space

I discovered that the local NaNoWriMo group, NaNoWriMo Essex, had an online space dedicated to the discussion of our efforts in creative writing, and this was hosted on

the website Discord. Discord is a free voice, video, and text chat platform that allows users to create servers, which customizable communities where people can communicate in real-time across multiple themed channels. This space, for members of the NaNoWriMo Essex group, became an important part of my NaNoWriMo journey. I met several other writers on Discord, and we had extended conversations via this platform with each other about our works-in-progress, about NaNoWriMo, about how we balanced this writing commitment with the rest of our lives, and our hopes and dreams for the future.

We decided that we would challenge each other to writing sprints in a supportive community, and there is a function on Discord where you can sprint against each other. You input how many words you're starting with, how long you're going to write for, and then the person with the most words at the end 'wins' that session. These ideas of winning and losing are central to NaNoWriMo, where the terminology around completing the challenge is to 'win' NaNoWriMo.

All the writers I met made me feel supported, and enabled me to continue with my challenge, even when I was struggling to find the time to write. I was encouraged that other people were in the same position that I was, even though I had not met them personally. This disconnect between my real life and the everyday struggles and joys associated with that, for example through my work as a teacher, was separate from this online persona that I adopted: the persona of Katherine the author, rather than Katherine the EdD student, or Mrs Davis-Wright the teacher. It was a space where I could exist in my pure authorial form. The only things that I thought of when existing in this space were my book, my writing and my characters.

In this sense, I engaged in an online affinity space (Gee 2000; 2018), where shared interests and passions bound us together as a creative community, rather than social status or employment.

Nanowrimo: 'winning'

As discussed, the terminology around *winning* is fully embedded within NaNoWriMo, as participants race against the clock to complete 50,000 words of writing before the end of November. Once this was completed, writers were eligible to collect a winner's pack. This included the certificate pictured below in Figure 2, as well as access to online discount codes for NaNoWriMo merchandise or discounts on software that may be of interest to authors, such as Scrivener or other Grammarly-type software.

The emotion associated with 'winning' was huge. I felt an immense sense of pride in my achievement, happiness that I had been able to tell the story I wanted to tell, and relief that the stress of trying to complete 50,000 words in one month was over. The pressure was off. I did manage to write some more words during this month; however, this was something that could be done at my own leisure and was no longer bound by the pressure to complete a certain goal.

Having unsuccessfully attempted NaNoWriMo twice before my November 2023 attempt, it was also a relief to know that I could do this. Similar to the process of writing my first novel, where one of the main challenges was a sense of the unknown about whether or not I could actually write a whole novel – I was unsure, when I started in November 2023, that I could write a novel or reach 50,000 words in just one month. However, this attempt was successful and proved to me that I *could* produce

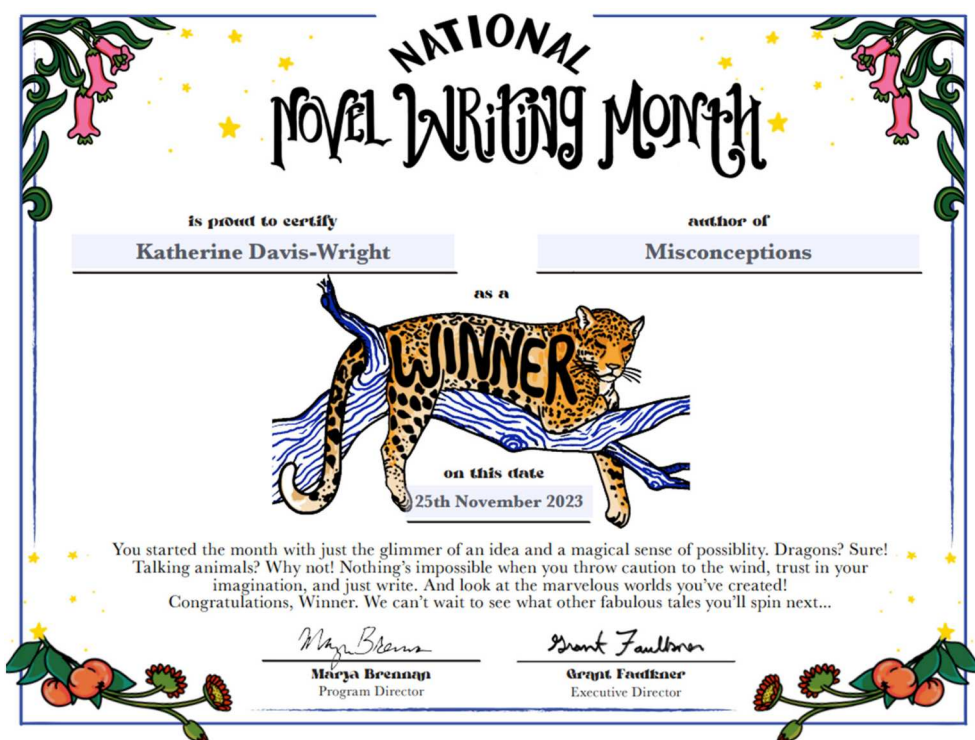


Figure 2. Winner's certificate.

art within the constraints of the challenge, which I felt was objectively difficult. It just meant changing some of my priorities, canceling social events, and really prioritizing and focusing on my artistry to achieve it.

It showed me that dedicating time to my art is vital in maintaining the all-important writing schedule that authors need in order to exist as the verb 'a writer' – because you write – rather than something that is attained once and then is 'true' forever. The joy of winning was celebrated by purchasing some NaNoWriMo merchandise, and reflecting happily on my manuscript. I was pleased that I had recaptured my authorial identity by taking part in NaNoWriMo in November 2023, and I felt that it was a challenge I rose to successfully.

I am a writer. *I can* write novels. *I can* write short stories. And *I can* write academically. One type of writing is not prioritized over another. All writing is communication. All writing is important in sharing your voice and your message with the world. It's how we communicate with others (or indeed, the void) and winning NaNoWriMo connected me with a community of people who understood and cared about my authorial identity.

Novel writing as a liminal space

Often, as a doctoral researcher, I have considered my journey through my studies as that of someone traversing a liminal space. As a final-year doctoral student preparing to submit my thesis for examination in October 2025, I find myself in the middle of the

process of *becoming*. Becoming an early career researcher has been conceptualized by some scholars as a type of extended apprenticeship for scholarly work. In this way, doctoral students are constantly navigating the process of becoming. Certainly, this is something that has affected my day-to-day life throughout the four years I have been studying.

A vivid example of this is how, once criticality is embedded in a person, their worldview changes. I've found it increasingly difficult, in my job as a teacher, to accept policy changes based on shaky evidence, and I've questioned things I once would have blindly believed. In a way, then, novel writing is also about navigating a liminal space – writers contend with a blank document in front of them and are compelled to tell their stories. The blink of the cursor can be both oppressive and freeing. It is important to remember that much of this liminality is grounded in the writing of the first draft of a novel. This is where the plot, characterization, structure, etc., are still being worked out, and the project can feel, at times, unwieldy or like it will never be finished. In this way, writers endure, or perhaps engage with, the process of liminality. They are *becoming* the author of the book they are writing.

I have now written three novels, and in my experience, the process of writing each novel is different. When I wrote *Erosion*, which, as I've explained, was the final product for my master's degree, I was writing for a specific audience. My writing was shaped by feedback along the way from academic tutors, and I was writing with them in mind, as well as with the examiner in mind.

However, with subsequent novels, I felt differently. For example, I finished my second novel, *Misconception*, after taking part in NaNoWriMo. It was only once I had finished writing this novel and shared it with my sister that I decided I wanted to contact literary agencies to seek literary representation. This intended audience was not in my head as I was writing the novel. I was writing it for myself rather than with a specific audience or market in mind, and I believe it made *Misconception* more authentic as a result.

However, the third novel, *Limerence*, has been written while I have a literary agent, and that has affected what and how I have written the novel. Now, the possibility of this novel being published is at the forefront of my mind, as I have access to a previously guarded or gatekept sector: the publishing industry.

In this way, then, to write a novel is to navigate a liminal space, with authors *becoming* during the process of writing: learning about themselves and their craft along the way. Every book teaches me something new: about myself, about my characters, about my technical craft. Each one is a revelation of sorts. However, one thing that all of my projects have shared is a feeling of elation, pride, and accomplishment when finishing a full draft of a manuscript.

The satisfaction of a story – this narrative which once existed only in my head – now being a physical or digital, tangible thing that can be shared and enjoyed by other people is something that brings me a great deal of joy (regardless of the contents of the novel as my work is usually dark in tone).

Recapturing my authorial identity

I set out in 2023 to recapture my authorial identity. I felt like I had lost this part of myself through teaching, through studying, and through having very little time to pursue my own interests and hobbies outside of these two all-encompassing facets of my identity.

Teaching full-time on its own is demanding: there is a well-known teaching recruitment and retention crisis, partly due to the workload of the job and also the emotional demands (Beames 2023). Managing student behavior, addressing safeguarding concerns, which are often articulated through students' creative writing, as well as responding to instances of abuse from both students and parents can have a significant impact on educators' mental health and overall wellbeing.

When considering the additional challenge of completing a Doctorate in Education within four years alongside full-time teaching, it becomes evident why opportunities for personal creative writing were limited. This lack of time contributed to a growing sense of dissonance between my professional practices and personal identity. I began to feel increasingly inauthentic advocating, both to my students and within my research proposals, that being a writer is not merely a static identity – a noun – but an active process – a verb, to echo Stephen Fry's framing, reproduced below:

We are not nouns, we are verbs. I am not a thing – an actor, a writer – I am a person who does things – I write, I act – and I never know what I'm going to do next. I think you can be imprisoned if you think of yourself as a noun. (Fry 2010)

By this logic, I felt unable to authentically identify as a writer, having not engaged in creative writing for a prolonged period. This disconnect raised critical questions for me about the legitimacy of teaching and researching the development of authorial identity without concurrently enacting it myself. The challenge I set myself, trying to write 50,000 words of *Misconception* in November 2023, was a final, desperate attempt to recapture my authorial identity and to feel like a writer once more. As Fry (2010) argues, a writer writes, and in November 2023, I wrote a lot. I was aiming for *Misconception* to be around 80,000 words long. When I started NaNoWriMo (slightly against the spirit of the programme, where you are supposed to start a completely fresh novel), I'd already written around 15,000 words of the story. By the end of November 2023, I'd written an additional 50,000 words, meaning that my narrative was mostly complete. There was a section at the end of the novel that I needed to develop, and although in December 2023 I had to return to doctoral study (having only taken a month away from it), I was actually able to complete the novel in February 2024.

In doing so, I had reclaimed my authorial identity. I was undeniably a writer.

Encouraged by my sister, who was the first reader of my novel, I sent the manuscript to literary agents and found representation later that year. This cemented my authorial identity. It wasn't only *me* that thought I was a writer; someone in the industry agreed with me. However, without these affinity spaces, such as the NaNoWriMo Discord chat (an online affinity space), and the face to face affinity space that I shared with writer friends and my sister in the real world, I may not have pursued representation.

Craft's little-c creativity theory has made me reconsider what I consider creative ability to be in terms of creative writing. I had a duality of thinking around creativity, and this seems to be related to the different facets of my identity. For example, I would praise my students' creativity for their efforts in class during creative writing. However, I would have a much harsher lens when considering my own creativity, becoming quite a harsh critic of myself. I felt like the work I was producing was not good enough and was not worthy of being read or consumed by anyone else because it wasn't part of the literary canon or an example of extraordinary creative genius. However, this is

subjective, and deeper consideration led me to consider what was truly important in creative writing. Was it the *process* that was important to me, or was it the *product*? I argue that the process is the most important part of creative writing. The process, that journey navigating that liminal space of becoming a creative writer, for me is more valuable than having the product of a finished book, because it is through the process that we become authors, that we become artists. I argue that there is no end product without that process.

It is not easy to write a novel, but it is fulfilling. I believe that I have recaptured my authorial identity. I identify proudly as a writer, alongside my other identities – teacher, doctoral researcher, wife, daughter and friend. It was a long and arduous process to reconcile these different facets of my identity, and Gee's (2000; 2018) and Craft's (2001) theories have helped me conceptualize how I feel about writing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, taking part in NaNoWriMo 2023 allowed me to recapture a sense of my own authorial identity, which I believe had been lost somewhere along the journey of being a teacher and doctoral researcher. This experience gave me the opportunity to explore the limits of my creative capabilities and to regain both confidence and credibility in running and facilitating arts-based workshops with the students who volunteered to be participants in my doctoral research.

When I spoke to these students about creative writing as part of my doctoral study, guiding them through workshops and supporting them in their own authorial journeys, I was not only drawing on my identity as a teacher, but also as a practising artist. I felt I was speaking from a place of current experience, rather than relying solely on historical identity. I was actively engaging in the same creative processes they were, making my work ethnographically oriented and lending a level of authenticity to my facilitation that might not have been possible otherwise. This authenticity, I believe, enhanced the rapport I had with students, particularly because many English teachers may not share a background in English Language or creative writing in the same way.

It is worth noting that in April 2025, NaNoWriMo announced that due to a series of scandal, reputational damage and financial issues, it was closing down (Creamer 2025). However, many writers' groups have flooded online spaces such as Reddit communities, offering Discord servers for writers to fill the void left by this, so although it is no longer possible to take part in a branded NaNoWriMo event, other unofficial spaces exist, which I argue offer the same benefits, and I plan to spend this November novel writing after the submission of my doctoral thesis.

By reclaiming my authorial identity, I was able to more fully embody the dual roles of artist and educator. This alignment between practice and research not only strengthened the ethnographic integrity of my study but also allowed me to model the creative vulnerability and persistence required to produce meaningful work. My experience aligns with Gee's (2000; 2018) concept of affinity spaces, where learning and identity formation occur through shared interest and participation. Through NaNoWriMo and associated writing communities both online and offline, I re-entered such an affinity space and reconnected with others who shared my passion, offering and receiving support in a way that enhanced both my writing and my teaching.

Furthermore, by applying Craft's theory of little-c creativity, I reframed my understanding of what it means to be creative, conceptualizing it not as a pursuit of genius or perfection, but as an ongoing process of becoming. Creativity, in this sense, became something lived and enacted, rather than simply performed or possessed. In reclaiming my identity as a writer, I was also reaffirming the legitimacy and value of creativity in everyday practice, which is a concept I now carry into my doctoral research, my teaching, and my wider identity as an academic and artist.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

Katherine Davis-Wright is a final year doctoral student at the University of Sheffield and a secondary school English teacher. Her thesis is centred around Year 10 students' experiences of creative writing both inside of and outside of the National Curriculum, and how these experiences shape their authorial identities. She is also a novelist, having written her first novel as part of her MA in Creative Writing at City, University of London. She continues to write, working on her third novel, and embracing her artist-teacher-researcher identity whole-heartedly.

ORCID

Katherine Davis-Wright  <http://orcid.org/0009-0006-5558-6936>

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